Sin the Cauſe of GOD's *Diſpleaſure againſt a People.*

Delivered in a

SERMON

ON THE

PUBLICK FAST,

December 8. 1721.

By SAMUEL CLIFFORD.

LONDON:

Printed for EMAN. MATTHEWS, *at the* Bible *in* Paternoſter-Row. 1721.

Price Four Pence.

JOSHUA VII. 10, 11, 12.

And the Lord ſaid to Joſhua, Get thee up, wherefore lieſt thou thus upon thy Face? Iſrael hath ſinned, and they have alſo tranſgreſſed my Covenant which I commanded them: For they have taken of the accurſed Thing, and have alſo ſtolen, and diſſembled alſo, and they have put it even among their own Stuff. Therefore the Children of Iſrael could not ſtand before their Enemies, becauſe they were accurſed; neither will I be with You any more, except ye deſtroy the accurſed from amongſt you.

GOD having delivered up *Jericho* into the Hands of the Children of *Iſrael*, the Walls of the City falling down by the Ground after they had compaſſed it ſeven Days; the People were expreſsly forbid to convert any of the Spoils of the City to their own private Uſe, and that under the Penalty of contracting Guilt themſelves, and bringing a Curſe and Trouble on the whole Camp *.

* Chap. vi. 17, 18.

But as strict as the Prohibition was, (either a covetous and worldly-minded Man, had little or no regard unto it. For contrary to the command of God, he took a *Babylonish* Garment, a Wedge of Gold, and two hundred Shekels of Silver. Which Fact of his was so displeasing to God, that we read in the first Verse of this Chapter, where our Text lies, *The Anger of the Lord was kindled against* Israel.

"All of them (as Mr. *Pool* observes on the Place) "were punished for their own Sins, whereof each "had a sufficient Proportion, but God took this oc- "casion to inflict the Punishment on the Society; "partly, because divers of them might be guilty of "this Sin, either by coveting what he actually did, "or by concealing of his Faults, which is proba- "ble could not be unknown to others; or by "not sorrowing for it, and endeavouring to purge "themselves from it; partly, to make Sin the more "hateful, as being the Cause of such publick and "dreadful Judgments; and partly, to oblige all the "Members of every Society to be more circumspect "in ordering of their own Actions, and more dili- "gent to watch over one another, to prevent the Mis- "carriages of their Brethren".

Well, *Jericho* being taken (as was said before) there was a Detachment made of three thousand Men to go up against *Ai*: But, instead of returning Conquerors, they turn their Backs upon their Enemies, and flee before them with the Loss of thirty-six Men.

Some Generals who looked no further than to *second Causes*, would it may be in such a Case as this, have been ready to Blame the commanding Officers, or the common Soldiers; there was Conduct wanting in the one, and Courage in the other: Or they would have said, the Detachment was too small, we were over-powered with Numbers; let us augment our Forces to render them equal with, if not superior to the Enemy, and notwithstanding this defeat Victory will yet turn to our side.

But

But *Joshua* took another Method: He knew that *this Evil was of the Lord*, and therefore as one who did believe not only the Being, but also the Providence of God in a very humble manner, he makes his Application to him, complaining of what had befallen them *; *And Joshua rent his Cloaths, and fell to the Earth upon his Face, before the Lord, until Even-tide, he and the Elders of Israel, and put Dust upon their Heads. And Joshua said, alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this People over Jordan, to deliver us into the Hands of the Amorites to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan. O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their Backs before their Enemies! For the Canaanites, and all the Inhabitants of the Land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our Name from the Earth, and what wilt thou do unto thy great Name?*

Whereupon, in the Words of our Text, God tells him, † 1. That *Sin* was the *Cause* of this present Disaster. 2. He threatens to with-hold his Blessing from them for the future, unless they did put it away.

The Words would afford us several Notes of Instruction, but we shall take notice only of one general Observation, which lies very plain before us from them, *viz.*

That Sin is the Cause of God's Displeasure against a People, and the Calamities which do follow thereupon.

Do they suffer by the *Plague*, or any other contagious and mortal Disease? It is Sin that brings it upon them. Thus when God sent a *Plague* among the Children of *Israel* in the Wilderness, which cut off fourteen thousand seven hundred Persons, it was as a Punishment of their Sin for murmuring against *Moses* and *Aaron* †. And afterwards in *David's* time, when seventy thousand were destroyed in three Days space

* Ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. † Numb. 16. 41, 43, 44.

by

by the *Plague*, it was as a *Punishment* of *David's* Sin in numbering the People *.

The like I may say of the Sword; when God threatened to send a Sword on the *Jews* †, it was, because they had not *obeyed his voice, nor walked therein*, as it is, *v.* 13. foregoing. The like threatning we have ||, *I will consume them by the Sword.* And the Reason is given in the 10th Verse, because of their Iniquity.

I may say the same of *Famine*, when God sends it either by with-holding Rain, whereupon the Earth becomes dry and cannot bring forth it's Fruits; or by showering it down unseasonably or immoderately, whereby the Fruits of the Earth are destroyed when they are brought forth, and brought to Maturity. It was for Sin, that God threatened the Children of *Israel* with this Judgment **. And it was for Sin, and their Continuance therein, that God afterwards brought this Judgment upon their Posterity ††. *I have given you Cleanness of Teeth in all your Cities, and want of Bread in all your Places, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.*

I may also add, when *Trade Decays*, and Men grow Poor; they rise early, go to Bed late, eat the Bread of Sorrows, are diligent and laborious in their several Callings, weary their Bodies, and tire their Minds, and all to little Purpose: All this is long of Sin ‡, *Ye have sown much, and bring in little; He that earneth Wages, earneth it to put it into a Bag with Holes; He looked for much, and it came to little, and when ye brought it Home, I did blow upon it: Why, saith the Lord of Hosts? because of mine House that is waste, and ye run every Man to his own House.*

---

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. † Jer. ix. 16. || Chap. xiv. 12.
** Deut. xxviii. 23. †† Amos. iv. 6. ‡ Haggai, i. 6, 9.

The Use we shall endeavour to make of this, shall be by Way of Information.

First, *This lets us see unto what to impute the Miseries and Calamities that do at any Time befal a People, viz. to their Sins.* Whoever are the Instruments, or whatever are the Means by which they do suffer, 'tis *Sin* which is the grand *Cause* of their Sufferings. Was there no Sin, there would be no Calamity in the World. It was thus before Sin entred into the World, and it would be thus again if Sin had left the World. It is by means of Sin, that Persons do suffer, and Families suffer, and Societies suffer, and Kingdoms suffer. There are indeed no Calamities that do at any Time befal a Person or People without a Providence. God doth order them as to the Time of their Continuance, and the Measure of them; but he doth never send them, unless it be on the Account of Sin. For he doth *not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men* *. Nor doth he ever punish an innocent Person.

Sometimes People may see their *Sin* in their *Punishment*, as we may partly see *England*'s Sin in what it suffers at this very Day. The Nation were hastning to be Rich, and we were to be a flourishing People, by Ways and Means *unknown* to former Ages. The Thoughts of Death seemed to be put away from many People, as if they had gotten a Discharge from the Grave, or at least a long Lease of Life; so that *Moses*'s Threescore and Ten, was once more to be extended to *Methuselah*'s Nine Hundred Sixty and Nine Years before they died. The *Providence* of God was *overlook'd*, as if they could do well enough without his Blessing. All Care about another World seemed to be laid aside; and no won-

* Lam. iii. 33.

der

der when their very Hearts were ſo ſet upon the Things of this World, as if in the Enjoyment of them, they were to enjoy a Kind of Heaven upon Earth. The *one neceſſary* Thing, was to get Money, in order to purchaſe Eſtates, Build fine Houſes, and Complement themſelves at the Conceit of what they had, or were to have; *Soul, thou haſt much Goods laid up for many Years, take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry.* Enjoy what thou haſt, thou art great, and in a Way to be greater, and therefore live great in thy Table, thy Apparel, and in thy Attendants. Let the World ſee what thou haſt, how much thou doeſt *differ* from thy former *ſelf*, as well as from *others* of thy Inferiors. And on a ſudden the Scene is ſo far changed, that the Nation is become a Kind of Bankrupt; Thouſands of Families ruined, and they who purchaſed Eſtates in the Air, built Houſes, and planted Vineyards there, are fallen beyond all Hopes of Recovery in *this* World. There is indeed a Door of Hope open for them in Reference to *another* World. What they enjoyed of this World's Goods is loſt, irrecoverably loſt, but would they take Occaſion from their preſent Loſſes to excite themſelves ſeriouſly to Mind, and prepare for a better World, to get Grace, and grow in Grace, that they may at laſt be Partakers of the heavenly Glory, theſe *Loſſes* would be to *their Gain.* Be it ſo that they have loſt, ſome All, others almoſt All they had in this World, if after all, the Lord may be their God, and they his People; may they love God, and God love them, they will be *rich* while they are *poor*, have as it were *All*, while they have *Nothing*, becauſe they have an *Intereſt* in the *Favour* of that God, who is *more* than all the *World* to his People.

But if Miſeries and Calamities do at any Time befal a People, and they cannot ſee their Sin in their Puniſhment, they may be aſſured of this, that Sin is the cauſe of them; and to overlook this, is the

way

way for them to go on in their Sins without Repentance and Reformation; and to have the Calamities they ſuffer under, *continued* upon them, yea, it may be *entailed* upon Poſterity after them. I fear we are neither ſenſible of the Hand of *God* in what hath befallen us, nor of the *Evil* of our Sins, and the Hand which they have had in our Calamities as we ſhould be. And ſhould we go and make our Complaint to God, as *Joſhua* did in our Text, Credit is ſunk, Trade is decay'd, Things are out of Courſe, and Poverty is come on upon Multitudes, like an armed Man. God may anſwer us as he did him, *England* hath ſinned; there is an accurſed Thing amongſt you, and thence it is that Things go amiſs with you. You have departed from me by your Sins, and unleſs you repent and reform, I will not be with you. Go to the Gods you have made, to the *World* which you have *loved* more than me; go to your carnal Wiſdom, to the Counſels you have taken, without any Regard either to my *Bleſſing* or *Providence*. You have rejected me, and can you look for any other, but that I ſhould withdraw my Bleſſing from you?

We may impute our late and preſent Calamities to one Thing and another. Some may ſay, ſuch and ſuch Meaſures were not well *taken*; others may ſay, they were not well *managed*; but had it not been for *Sin*, it would not have been with us as it hath been and is. God by his Providence, hath teſtified his Diſpleaſure againſt us. What we have ſuffer'd, ſhews, that *God* is not pleaſed with us. And therefore while others, like the Dog bite the Stone that is caſt at him, and look not to the Hand it comes from, let us look to the Hand of God in what hath befallen us. And tho' we may not overlook *ſecond Cauſes* altogether, let us look upon *Sin* as the *grand Cauſe*; that God may have the Glory of his Juſtice

in punishing us, and the Glory of his Mercy in punishing us *less* than our Deserts have been.

Had it not been for the Business of the *South-Sea* (will some say) we had not been plung'd into such inextricable Difficulties. True: And had it not been for *Sin*, this had not been. God would not have taken Counsel away from so many Men, who are looked upon to be wise in their Generation, to come into Schemes of such pernicious Consequence; nor would he have suffer'd others who retain'd the use of their Reason, to be so far *infatuated*, as to lay aside their lawful and gainful Employments in the World, Sell what they had, and put the Price thereof into the *South-Sea* Stock, and there run after a *golden Shadow*, until they had lost *Shadow* and *Substance* too; even all; yea, more than all (if I may so speak) they had in the World. How high were many in their own Conceits, and how low are they fallen? What a strange Alteration did a few Months make in their worldly Circumstances? At the Beginning of the last Year they prosper'd in their Callings, and increas'd in worldly Goods, but they must take a *speedier* and *nearer* Way to grow great in the World, and by hastening to be Rich, they are become so Poor as to have nothing left. And they have this mortifying Consideration to add to their Affliction, that they have not only brought Poverty upon *themselves*, but must leave their *Wives* and *Children* Beggars.

O the Uncertainty of earthly Things! never I believe since the Creation of the World, had so many Men and Women occasion given them at once to apply that of the wise Man to themselves *; *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.* O the Folly of those who hasten to be Rich! what we have suffered on

* Eccles. i, 2.

that

that Account may be a *warning* to the preſent Generation, and as a *Pillar* of *Salt* to Poſterity, not to promiſe themſelves great Matters from this World, the *Happineſs* of which is like *Muſhrooms*, which ariſe out of the Earth in a Night, and a few Days after diſappear, ſo that you cannot perceive the place where they grow up. Happy the People whoſe God is the Lord, that they may have a Happineſs *beyond* the *Grave*, where both the World, and the World's greateſt Admirers, muſt at once take their *everlaſting Leave* of each other.

Secondly, *This Doctrine lets us ſee what cauſe we have to fear leſt God ſhould manifeſt his Diſpleaſure againſt us, by bringing his Judgments upon us.* Our Sins do teſtify againſt us; and what will be the conſequence, only God doth know, and Time muſt diſcover. If we eſcape the *Plague*, it will be beyond what we can well expect, as well as beyond what we do deſerve.

What a Multitude of Atheiſtical Wretches are there among us, who deny the Being of that God in whom they themſelves do *live* and *move*, and *have their Beings*; and by the Brutiſhneſs of their Actions, let the World ſee the Effects of their Brutiſh Principles. And how many others are there who *profeſs to know God, but in Works deny him, being abominable and diſobedient, and unto every good Work reprobate* *.

The Name of God is ſo ſacred and dreadful, that the very *mention* of it beſpeaks an *Awe* on the Spirits, both of Speaker and Hearers: But how is this ſacred Name blaſphemed by Perjury, while God is called in to *Witneſs* to a *Lie*, or to teſtify the Sincerity of a Promiſe that was *never* deſigned to be *kept*. And tho' God hath ſaid that he will not *hold thoſe*

* Tit. i. 16.

guiltleſs who take his Name in vain; yet what Multitudes are there who do make a By-word thereof by Swearing by it in their common Diſcourſe, as if the great and dreadful God, at whom the *Mountains* are ſaid to *quake*, and the *Hills melt* *. Was one of the moſt contemptible Beings in the World.

And whether the Lord's Supper is not proſtituted by the Sacramental Teſt, I ſubmit to Conſideration. I deny not the Lawfulneſs of renouncing any, or all the Errors of *Popery*, and particularly the abſurd and monſtrous Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*. Nor do I deny the Lawfulneſs of receiving the Sacrament according to the Manner uſed in the Eſtabliſhed Church. And when a Man enters upon a Place of Truſt in the Government, I readily acknowledge, that 'tis not only lawful, but commendable too, for him ſolemnly to *renew* his *Covenant* with God at the Lord's Table, in Hopes to receive Grace from him for the Diſcharge of the Work he hath undertaken; but 'tis well known, that there was nothing of this Nature in *View* when this Teſt was at firſt brought in upon us; and I believe we may without Breach of Charity ſuppoſe, that the Generality of thoſe who take the Teſt, and receive the Sacrament, do not receive it as a *Renewal* of the Chriſtian *Covenant* betwixt God and them, but as 'tis made a *Qualification* for an *Office*. And can any who do conſider the Nature of the Lord's Supper, and the Ends for which it was at firſt Inſtituted by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, believe that it was ever his Will or Intent that it ſhould be turned into ſuch an uſe, as to put *Magiſtrates* into a Capacity to *adminiſter Juſtice*, and *other* Perſons into a *Poſt* to get their *Bread*. How many of thoſe who receive the Sacrament to qualify them for an Office, and thereby profeſs to

* Nahum i. 5.

eſteem

eſteem and value the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, do notwithſtanding ridicule his Perſon, Laws and Government, and will not have him to *Reign* over them: Receive the Sacrament as it were to-Day, and by ſo doing, intimate, that they do ſolemnly, ſincerely, and unreſervedly give up themſelves to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; and before Night, or the next Day, *devote* themſelves to the *Devil*, by calling upon God to *damn* their *Souls*. Was there but this Sin among us, I think it was enough to give us Cauſe for perpetual Fears, leſt God by his Judgments ſhould manifeſt his Diſpleaſure againſt us. A Thing that reflects Shame upon a Chriſtian Nation; a *crying Sin*, but *peculiar* to us in *England*, for all other Chriſtians beſides in this Reſpect do ſhew *more Deference* to this ſacred Inſtitution, than to Proſtitute it after ſuch a ſort. We may wonder at ſome Men's Stiffneſs to retain the Sacramental Teſt, and we may wonder alſo at God's Patience in bearing with us on that Account.

" I ſhall not (ſaid one) enter into the particular " Hardſhips and Inconveniences that have grown " from this Sacramental Teſt, as it confines all that " would ſerve their Country herein, to conform to " the Eſtabliſhed Church; but only take Notice of " the horrid Guilt and Wickedneſs that hath at- " tended it, and may certainly be expected to con- " tinue and grow upon us, while this ſolemn Pro- " feſſion of Chriſtianity (the receiving the Holy " Communion) continues to be a civil Teſt or Qua- " lification for a Poſt or Employment, that perhaps " to many may be their only Livelihood. The " bold and deſperate Infidels will make a Jeſt of the " awful Solemnity; and ſuch as are not ſo far ad- " vanced in Wickedneſs, will go to the Holy Ta- " ble trembling and ſelf-condemned; but both will " go while the Impoſition remains. Neither the " Honour of God, nor the Peace of their own

Conſci-

" Conſciences, will prevail with them, to forbear the " Ordinance; while the hard Neceſſity lieth upon " them, either to receive the Sacrament, or to beg " their Bread. Their Hearts will ſurely bleed with- " in them, that have any juſt Reverence of Religi- " on, and ſacred Things; when they ſhall hear a " bouncing ſenſeleſs Bully, in open defiance of God, " and all that is ſacred, calling out to his Crony, " *D—ne you, Rogue, I am to receive the Sacrament to* " *morrow.* Or, to hear others proteſt, *That they do* " *not, dare not, when at the Lord's Table, look upon* " *the Elements as any other than common Bread and* " *Wine, and yet dare not keep away neither; becauſe* " *they and their Families then muſt ſtarve. Inſtances* " *of this nature are not uncommon among us. Lord,* " *lay not this Iniquity to the Nations Charge* *.

But to proceed: How is the Lord's Day prophaned amongſt us? The Seventh Day of the Week, from the Creation of the World, to the Reſurrection of Chriſt, was ſet apart to commemorate the great work of Creation; and the Firſt Day of the Week, ſince the Reſurrection of Chriſt is Inſtituted to be obſerved in Remembrance of the greater work of Redemption. The great Work and Buſineſs of the Day, is for Man to retire from the *World* to *God*, to praiſe him for the work both of Creation and Redemption: Not only to reſt from *Sin*, for that is what ſhould be done every Day; but to reſt from the *World*, and to ſpend the Day in the private and publick Duties of God's Worſhip, as a *Preparative* to that *everlaſting Reſt*, which remains for the People of God in Heaven: But many ſpend it after ſuch a manner, as if the Day was ſet apart by God, for Men to Sin, and ſerve the Devil. Taking of Journeys, buying and ſelling, driving of Cattel, and other ſervile Works; neglect of

* Mr. *Robinſon's* Anſwer to *Bennet's* brief Hiſtory. p. 362.

God's

God's Worſhip, carnal Sports and Recreations, and Haunting of Alehouſes, are too common among us on the Lord's Day.

'Tis not ſo great a Duty to honour the King, as 'tis to fear God; and yet that God, who hath required the one, hath alſo commanded the other *. And they who out of Conſcience of their Duty to *fear God*, ſhould *honour* the *King*: But how many are there who do ſpeak evil of Dignities; curſe and revile the King in ſecret (whom God by his Providence hath ſet over us) and would do it more openly, did not the Fear of the Gallows and Halter (more than Conſcience of their Duty to God or Man) reſtrain them.

Murders are frequently committed among us, tho' God hath poſitively declared †. That *whoſo ſheddeth Man's Blood, by Man ſhall his Blood be ſhed*; and Murderers are to be found among the Number of thoſe who ſhall have their *Part in the Lake which burns with Fire and Brimſtone* ||.

The frequent Inſtances that we have of baſe born Children in moſt Pariſhes, and the frequent Advertiſements we meet with in News Papers, of Remedies for the Cure of the *foul Diſeaſe*, tell us plainly, that *Whoring* is not out of *Faſhion*, tho' 'tis ſaid to the Terror of the guilty, that *Whoremongers* and *Adulterers God will judge* §.

The many renewed Inſtances we have every Seſſions and Aſſizes of Men and Women condemned to be whipt, baniſh'd and hang'd, for taking from others what they had no right to, is a Demonſtration, that Theft is too common among us; tho' *Thieves* are to be found in the *black Liſt* of thoſe, who ſhall not *inherit the Kingdom of God* ‡. And how far Extortioners, and others who *ſqueeze* the Poor to wrong what

* 1 Pet. ii. 17. † Gen. ix. 6. || Rev. xxi. 8. § Heb. xiii. 4. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 10.

they

they can out of their *Labour*, &c. are like to fall under the ſame Doom, is what may deſerve the Conſideration of the Guilty.

And how far there hath been a breaking in of late, (after an unuſual manner) on God's Authority, in tranſgreſſing the Tenth Commandment, by coveting what was their Neighbours, betwixt God and the Guilty be it. Among others, the Cries of Widows, and poor Fatherleſs Children, on Account of their *Loſſes* tell us, that ſome have been *Gainers*; how far the getting in *ſuch a manner*, and keeping what they have gotten by the Loſs of others, is conſiſtent with the great Goſpel Duty of *loving their Neighbour as themſelves*; I leave to be determined at that awful Time, which is coming on upon a ſinful and ſecure World apace, when the hidden Works of Darkneſs ſhall be brought to Light, and all (without Reſpect of Perſons) ſhall be adjudged to an everlaſting State, according as their Deeds have been. I heartily wiſh there may be no accurſed thing among us on that ſcore (*worſe* than *Achans*'s Golden Wedge, and *Babyloniſh* Garment) to provoke a righteous God, to whom Vengeance belongeth to take Vengeance upon us.

Pride and Fulneſs of Bread, (that is, Luxury and Exceſs, in eating and drinking) which were of old ſaid to be *Sodoms*, may now be reckoned among the Number of *England*'s Sins. Things are come to that paſs among us, that with many Perſons, ſcarce any of Gods Creatures, are good enough to feed and cloath their Bodies; thoſe Bodies which can derive their *original Deſcent*, from no nobler matter than the *Duſt* of the Earth; and muſt in a ſhort time be ſo far reduced to their original Duſt again, that the moſt diſcerning Eye in the World, will not be able to diſtinguiſh betwixt the Duſt of theſe pampered Bodies, and the *common Duſt* of the *Earth*.

The

The Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the dear Redeemer of a periſhing World, ſeems to be growing out of Date among us. The Name of God, the Attributes of God, and the Works of God, are aſcribed to him, and the worſhip due to God, is given to him; ſo that all the ways whereby we may know the Father to be God, we may know the Son to be God alſo, notwithſtanding which there are too many who deny his Godhead. Or if they allow him to be God, 'tis but a *ſubordinate* God, and when you have made the moſt of an *inferior God*, he is, and can be no more than a *ſuper-angelical Creature*.

And there are multitudes of others, who (tho' they do not deny Chriſt's proper Divinity, yet) are groſſly ignorant of him, know nothing of his Laws and Government, or the Ends and Benefits of Redemption; forget his Love to them, and overlook their Duty to him, and retain nothing of Chriſtianity but a *Name*, which is indeed a *Scandal* to the thing they make a Profeſſion of.

Chriſtianity it ſelf, ſeems to be going off it's original Bottom. Let any one ſeriouſly conſider, what the Chriſtian Religion, as deliver'd to us by Chriſt, and his Apoſtles do teach, *viz.* Repentance, Faith in Chriſt, Humility, Self-denial, Contempt of the World, Love to God and Man, Preparation for Death and Judgment, Diligence for Heaven, mortifying fleſhly Luſts, and Holineſs both in Heart and Life: And let him next look abroad in the World, and obſerve after what a ſort the Generality of Men and Women among us do live; and he muſt acknowledge, that either Chriſtianity is become a new Thing from what it was, or elſe that theſe have no more than an empty Name, to denominate them Chriſtians. And indeed their Lives and Converſations fully ſhew, that they are in a Dream about Religion; while they are ignorant of the God that made them, and the Saviour

that died for them; and forget the great Work they were made and redeemed for, and that eternal World which they are haſtening into, where they muſt be in a little while, and be for ever.

Moreover, what an indifferency is there in matters of Religion, among thoſe who do profeſs themſelves to be the People of God? Thoſe, I mean, of whatever Denomination, who profeſs to love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in Sincerity, and to teſtify the Sincerity of their Love, by the Sincerity of their Obedience to his Commands. How little ſpiritual Light, Life and Love is there in their Souls? All *Life* in matters relating to *this* World, but how *luke-warm* in Things relating to another? A thouſand delightful Thoughts about the things of this lower World, to one ſerious conſiderate Thought of the World above. A ſad ſign that their Faith which ſhould give them the *Victory* over this World, is *overcome* by the World.

One would think that the thoughts of an Eternal God, an Eternal World, and Eternal Joys and Torments in the other World, the conſequent of a holy or ſinful Life in this World, ſhould imploy their Minds, and ſo take off their Hearts from theſe earthly Things, as to render them little in their *Eyes*, (as they are little and mean in *themſelves*,) in compariſon of Eternity. Eternity! an amazing Word, an amazing Eſtate, and an amazing thing to conſider how Men and Women overlook it! And yet, the great ado which they keep about the Things of time, ſeem plainly to intimate, that many who profeſs themſelves to be the People of God, forget Eternity; at leaſt, that the Belief thereof hath little or no influence upon their Hearts and Lives. There is every where a *ſtriving* to be *Rich*, as if Money would not only be a ſupport to their Spirits, in the Agonies of Death, at their departure out of this World, but be a valuable Commodity, and of Uſe to

them

them in the other World too. But where is there the ſtriving to enter in at the *ſtrait Gate*, as there ſhould be, and the Nature of the thing doth require and call for?

A ſad Conſideration! that the profeſſed Heirs of Heaven ſhould be ſunk down into the Earth as they are, and that there ſhould be ſuch a Conformity in them to the reſt of the World, as there is. O tell it not in *Gath*, publiſh it not in *Askelon*; let not the World know the Degeneracy there is among thoſe who do profeſs themſelves to be the People of God; but, alas! 'tis too notorious to be concealed. God doth know it, and the World doth obſerve it, and take occaſion from thence to harden themſelves in Sin, and reproach the ways of God. Do the Men of the World, who are content to have their Portion in this Life, pamper their Fleſh in eating and drinking? And do not many of thoſe who profeſs to expect a Happineſs on the other ſide of the Grave, too much *indulge* their *Appetites* in theſe Things? Do the Men of the World ſhew the Vanity of their Minds, by the Lightneſs and Vanity of their attire? the People of God muſt be in the Faſhion too, and will in their Garb and Dreſs be conformable to the vain and vile Ones of the World, tho' 'tis ſuch as doth not at all become Men and Women *profeſſing Godlineſs*.

Ah poor *England*, the dear Land of our Nativity! we would gladly hope the beſt, but conſidering our Sins, and their ſeveral Aggravations, we have cauſe to fear how God will deal with us, and that the worſt is yet to come. We ſeem to be under the Frowns of Heaven already. We are ſick and languiſhing, decaying in the World, and declining in Religion. Our *Purſes* and *Graces* are both in a *Conſumption*. We are ſenſible of the one, but we do not feel the other. God ſeems to turn the dark Side of the Cloud to-

wards us, though we do not consider it as we ought. But as bad as it is, it may be worse, and when we reflect upon our Sins, they give us too great Cause to fear, lest it should be worse, as it would be, should the *Plague*, which we are threatened with from *France*, come over among us in *England*.

There is indeed great Care taken to prevent it (which is a very commendable Thing) as Ships performing Quarentine, where there is any Suspicion of Danger; removing Nusances, such as foul Streets, noisome Smells, *&c.* which might be as Tinder to the Fire, either to receive or spread the Infection should God visit us with the *Plague*. But there seems to be *one Thing* wanting, which I humbly conceive to be of as great, if not greater Necessity than any of the former, I mean, the *suppressing* of those *Sins* which are a Nusance (if I may so speak) to a Holy God, in whose Hands is the Power of Life and Death. Would *England*'s Magistrates exert themselves to suppress Immorality and Prophaneness; and let God-daring and God-provoking Sinners know and feel that they do not bear the Sword of Justice in vain; who knows, but that such a work might have the same Effect, to *prevent* the *Plague*, as *Phineahs*'s executing Judgment, had to *stop* it when begun *. But where Sin is suffered, as it were to pull the Judgments of God down upon a People, the utmost Care and Precaution that can be used, shall not prevent them. It looks well, that God hath put it into the Heart of the King, to appoint such a Day as this for the Nation, to humble themselves for their Sins, and to seek to him for Mercy; and if we turn from our Sins, and turn unto the Lord, this would give us Hopes that God will keep off his desolating Judgments from us. But while

* Psal. cvi. 30.

there

there is an accurſed thing among us, we have cauſe to fear, and fear again, that our *Sins will find us out*. In ſuch caſes the Judgments of God will break through all oppoſition, and all means uſed for prevention, ſhall be as unable to withſtand them, as the Morning Dew is to ſtand before the ſcorching Heat of the Noon-day Sun.

Thirdly, Our Doctrine lets us ſee *what our Duty is, with reſpect to the Judgments of God, which we either feel or fear.* What we feel, ſeem to be tokens of God's Diſpleaſure, and a plain Intimation that God is angry with us; and tell us that we ſhould ſpeedily conſider our ways, and Sin no more, leaſt worſe things come upon us; what we fear ſeem to ſpeak to us, as God by the Prophet did of old, to the Children of *Iſrael* *. *Therefore thus will I do unto thee*, O England! *and becauſe I will do thus unto thee prepare to meet thy God*, O England.

Our Duty is, to repent of our Sins, to mourn for the Sins of others, and to deprecate the Judgments which we either feel or fear.

1. *Our Duty is to repent of our Sins*, as thoſe who are ſenſible, how contrary Sin is to the holy Nature and Laws of God, and how much it doth expoſe the Sinner to all the Effects of God's Diſpleaſure, both in this World, and that which is to come.

Sirs, Look back to your original; were you not *ſhapen* in *Iniquity*, and *conceived* in *Sin*? Look into your Hearts, have they not been as it were *Dens*, for the *Reſidence* of vain worldly and ſinful Thoughts, which ſhould have been a *Temple* for the *Spirit* of God to *reſide* in? How much of the World and Sin, but how little of God, or Chriſt, or Heaven,

* Amos. iv. 12.

is to be found there? Look back upon your Lives; how unbecoming have your Converſations been of the Precepts, Promiſes, or Privileges of the Goſpel? Conſider what Sin is; what Sins you have been guilty both of Omiſſion and Commiſſion, and what things aggravate them, and break them off by Repentance. Acknowledge the Guilt and Filth you have contracted by them, as committed againſt the Authority of the God who made you, and the Love of a Jeſus, who died for you. Confeſs and bewail them before God; labour to be affected with a ſenſe of the Evil of Sin, and to be afflicted for it, that you may loath Sin, and loath your ſelves for Sin, and turn from your Sins to the Lord; as that which muſt Evidence the Sincerity of your Repentance. Compare your Lives and Actions with the Word of God. Conſider what God requires you to be and do, and what you have been and done, and you will ſee cauſe enough for Repentance. And would you look with a believing Eye, to a dying Hour, to the great Day of Judgment, and to an everlaſting Eſtate, it may do much to promote it.

If others will go on in the broad way that leads to Deſtruction; if they will ſleep on in Sin, and not be prevailed with to open their Eyes, and ſee the Danger they are in till they awake in Hell, where they will have no Reſt, Day or Night; they muſt take their Courſe, and take what will follow. But as you have any Fear of God before your Eyes; any Senſe of an Eternal World upon your Spirits; or know any thing what belongs to your own, and the Nation's Peace, awake to Righteouſneſs, and Sin not, that whoever do by their Sins provoke God, to manifeſt his Diſpleaſure againſt us, by bringing his Judgments upon us; you may have no hand in ſuch a curſed Work.

2. *Mourn for the Sins of Others. Rivers of Waters* (ſaid *David*) *run down mine Eyes, becauſe they keep not thy Law* *. Leave it to thoſe who know nothing of the Nature, Evil, or Puniſhment of Sin; who had never a ſerious Thought what a dreadful Thing it will be to fall into the Hands of a living God: A God, who will live for ever to puniſh them for their Sins, and to keep them alive to undergo as the Puniſhment thereof (call it which you will) the Miſeries of a dying Life, or a living Death to all Eternity: Leave it, I ſay, to them to make a Jeſt at Sin in themſelves or others, as if the Wrath of that God, who is a conſuming Fire, was a Thing to be played with; but do you bewail your own Sins, and the Sins of others.

By bewailing your own Sins, you will keep up lively Apprehenſions of the evil of Sin, which will be a Means to promote your Repentance for Sin; your Watchfulneſs againſt it, and your Thankfulneſs to God for pardoning Grace, to diſcharge you from the Guilt, and ſecure you from the Puniſhment of Sin.

By bewailing the Sins of others, you will ſhew your Pity to thoſe who are void of Compaſſion on themſelves; ſhew your Zeal for God, and your Hatred of Sin; and thereby keep your ſelves from the Guilt of other Men's Sins.

3. *Deprecate the Judgments which we either feel or fear.* 'Tis againſt God that Sin is committed, and 'tis God who hath threatened to puniſh it, and 'tis God alone who can pardon Sin, and ſecure the Sinner from the deſerved Puniſhment. 'Tis God

* Pſal. cxix. 136.

who

who ſends Judgments on a People, and 'tis He that can remove them, and Prayer is one Means which we ſhould uſe to prevent them when threatned, or remove them when inflicted. God hath bid us call upon him in the *Day of Trouble*, and promiſed to *deliver* us, that we may *glorify him* *. But then we muſt put away our Sins; for if we *regard Iniquity in our Hearts, God will not hear* †.

Pray in Faith, as thoſe who believe that God can prevent the Judgments we fear, or remove thoſe we feel; and as thoſe who have Ground to believe, that if we return to him, he will yet be merciful to us.

Pray in Humility, as thoſe who are ſenſible what an infinite Diſtance there is betwixt God and you; what your Sins have been, and what your Deſerts are by reaſon of Sin.

Pray alſo with ſuch Serioufneſs and Fervency, as thoſe who would obtain the Mercies you pray for, and be delivered from the Evils you pray againſt.

And in all your Prayers to God for Mercy, either for your ſelves or others; forget not to look to the Mediation and Interceſſion of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. As 'tis in his Name that you muſt pray; ſo what you receive by Prayer, muſt be for the ſake of his Merits and Mediation. And to excite you to your Duty in this Matter, I would deſire you to conſider,

1. *The dangerous Circumſtances we are under.* The Nation abounds with ſecure Sinners, who will not open their Eyes to ſee the Judgments of God when coming, nor fear them until they feel them; but

* Pſal. l. 15. † Pſal. lxvi. 18.

most

moſt conſiderate Perſons are alarmed at the Danger we are in; leaſt the *Plague* that hath raged in *France*, ſhould come over hither, and go on with the ſame deſolating Work among us. And who that conſiders the Majeſty of God, the Holineſs of his Nature, and the Severity of his Diſpleaſure againſt Sin; or conſiders what Sin is, and the Number, Nature, and Aggravation of our Sins, and the Judgments of God inflicted upon others for their Sins; but muſt ſee and ſay, that we have Cauſe enough to fear how Things will go with us. And therefore if others will provoke God by their Sins to bring his Judgments upon us, let us on the contrary do what we can by Repentance, Reformation, and Prayer, to keep them off.

2. Conſider *what a Mercy it is, that there are any Hopes of God's averting his Judgments from us.* The infected Goods that were carried to *Marſeiles*, might have been brought to *London*; and when the *Plague* had raged there, as it did at *Marſeiles*, it might have ſpread it ſelf into other Places; ſo that Death, the King of Terrors, having received a Commiſſion from an offended God, and being mounted the Pale Horſe, might at this very Day have been riding its dreadful Circuit throughout the Kingdom, conquering and to conquer; laying Heaps of dead Bodies upon Heaps, in ſuch Numbers, as not to leave enough alive to bury the Dead. The *Plague* in *France*, doth as it were call to us to be thankful, that what hath happened there, did not happen here. God by the ſame Providence, doth alſo call unto us to conſider our Ways, and meet him in the Way of our Duty, to prevent his coming againſt us in the Way of his Judgments.

3. Conſider *how deplorable our Condition would be, ſhould God as a Puniſhment of our abounding Sins, bring upon us the Judgments which we fear.* Should God give the deſtroying Angel a Commiſſion to execute his Wrath upon us: Should the devouring *Plague* (which in a ſhort Time hath put a Period to the Lives of ſuch Multitudes of Men and Women in a Neighbouring Kingdom) come over among us, what a Condition ſhould we be in? Who can conceive what the *Plague* is, and the Miſeries that attend it, unleſs it be thoſe who have been among the Sick, the Dying, and the Dead, and been Eye-witneſſes of the Deſolations it hath cauſed. By it the dear and loving Wife, the tender and affectionate Husband, and other near Relations, and moſt indeared Friends, have been cut off at one ſtroke; or if one hath ſurvived the other, it hath been only to hear of their Death, and ſee them carried away, and laid in their Graves; before they were took ſick, and died, and were carried to the ſame Place themſelves.

Doleful State in Times of Contagion! for thoſe who lived together, and dearly loved each other; now to ſhun the Society and Converſe one of another, as Men do Beaſts of Prey, ready to devour them.

Diſmal Spectacle indeed in populous Places to ſee Men and Women, ſome lying Dead in the Streets, others carrying Dead out of their Houſes, and Carts continually going and coming, to take them up and carry them away, and bury them in Heaps together!

A melancholy Thought to reflect upon the Caſe of thoſe who are confined either to their own Houſes, or within ſuch a Diſtrict of Ground; ſo that 'tis immediate Death to paſs the Bounds, and nothing but Death to remain within! The Rich indeed

indeed upon Foreſight of an approaching Storm, may quit their Habitations, and ſojourn elſewhere; and if they perceive the Clouds gathering over their Heads, they may remove again, and 'tis poſſible that by this means they may eſcape the Contagion, tho' not certain. For the *Plague* may follow them from Place to Place, and Death come after it, and overtake them at Times and Places, when and where they thought themſelves out of the reach of Danger. But the Poor muſt remain amidſt the Arrows of Death, and ſo have neither a convenient Habitation, nor Diet, nor Medicine, nor Attendance (which uſually happens in Times of the *Plague*) this muſt render their Condition deplorable.

The Lord in Mercy grant that when his Judgments are ſo near us, the Nation in General may learn Righteouſneſs; that we may fear Sin, as we fear God, or fear the Judgments of God: That we may not only keep a Faſt, and pray to God, as the *Ninevites* did in a Time of imminent Danger; but that God may ſee by our Works as he did by theirs *, that we turn from our evil Ways; otherwiſe, the *Ninevites* will riſe up in Judgment againſt us.

And for you in particular, who are my preſent Auditors, I would adviſe your to labour more to know God and your Duty: Look to him for Grace, to enable you to keep your ſelves in the Way of your Duty, and to keep up Life in your Duties; that you may not only perform Duties, and enjoy Ordinances, but as it were converſe with God in a Duty, and enjoy him in an Ordinance. This will be the Way to live in Heaven, while you are on Earth, and then when Death ſhall come and remove you hence, tho' it be by the *Plague* it

* Jonah iii. 9. 10.

ſelf

ſelf, you will only change your Place, but not your Company. The believing Forethoughts of which, will do much to make you overlook the Terrors of Death, and the Darkneſs of a Grave; as they are the Way from a ſinful troubleſome World, to a World of Holineſs, Peace, and Reſt; where you ſhall triumph over Death, be wholly free from Sin; be altogether out of the Reach of the Devil's Temptations; and live and love, and praiſe, and enjoy the ever-bleſſed God to all Eternity.

FINIS.